



Illinois
Department of
Agriculture

George H. Ryan, Governor • Joe Hampton, Director

Bureau of Land and Water Resources

State Fairgrounds • P.O. Box 19281 • Springfield, IL 62794-9281 • 217/782-6297 • TDD 217/524-6858 • Fax 217/557-0993

May 29, 2001

Mr. Roger Rocke, District Engineer
Illinois Department of Transportation
Division of Highways/District 2
819 Depot Avenue
Dixon, Illinois 61021-3546

Re: US 20 (FAP Route 301)
Section 43-1, -2, -3, -4, -5 & 177 - 1
JoDaviess and Stephenson Counties
Job No. P-92-004-92
US 20 Glacier Shadow Pass Study - Freeport to Galena

Dear Mr. Rocke:

Thank you for providing the Illinois Department of Agriculture with the final Agricultural Resources Technical Report (Volume 1) and Appendix C - Aerial Mapping (Volume 2) which was prepared for the US 20 study from Galena to Freeport in northwestern Illinois.

The IDA has reviewed the two-volume report that provides detailed information on the manner and extent to which the project will impact the area's agricultural resources. We believe the District has done a very thorough job of assessing the project's agricultural impacts. The Technical Report provides a clear and concise appraisal of the primary and secondary impacts associated with each of the 12 proposed alternative alignments. Table 3.1 (page 6-7) is particularly helpful in summarizing those impacts.

The IDA will comment on the project's compliance with the IDOT's Agricultural Land Preservation Policy and with the state's Farmland Preservation Act (505 ILCS 75/1 et seq.) after we have had a chance to review the project's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) which the IDOT anticipates will be available for circulation at the end of this year. The Draft EIS will provide the IDA with a broader perspective of the project's impact to the agricultural sector of the environment.

Should you have questions regarding our review of the Agricultural Resources Technical Report, please contact Mr. James Hartwig of my staff at 217-785-4470.

Sincerely,

Steve Frank, Chief
Bureau of Land and Water Resources

cc: Director Joe Hampton, IDA
Joan Messina, IDA
Mike Williams, IDA
John Cross, IDA
John Herath, IDA

Warren Goetsch, IDA
Lester Johnson, JoDaviess Co. SWCD
John Pinkowski, Stephenson Co. SWCD
Kevin Rund, Illinois Farm Bureau



Illinois Department of Agriculture

Bureau of Farmland Protection • Bureau of Soil and Water Conservation • State Fairgrounds
P.O. Box 19281 • Springfield, IL 62794-9281 • 217/782-6297 • TDD 217/524-6858 • Fax 217/524-4882

November 9, 1995

Mr. William D. Ost, District Engineer
Illinois Department of Transportation
Division of Highways/District 2
819 Depot Avenue
Dixon, Illinois 61021-3546

Re: FAP 301 (US 20 Four-Lane)
Section 43-1, -2, -3, -4, -5 & 177-1, -2
IL 84(N) to Bolton Road (near Freeport)
Jo Daviess and Stephenson Counties

Attn: Larry Reed

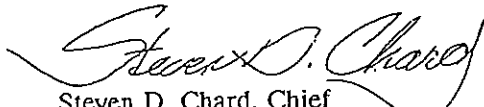
Dear Mr. Ost:

On September 26, 1995, you sent the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) a letter (copy enclosed) stating that District had contacted the IDOT Central Office regarding our request that Prime soils be made a consideration in the layout of proposed alignments through Snipe Hollow. In making our request, the IDOA does not advocate the elevation of the Prime farmland conversion impacts above other agricultural and environmental concerns. It is merely our goal to have alignments located on poorer quality soils while at the same time minimizing other social and environmental impacts.

The IDOA considers it necessary for IDOT to give such consideration to the soils in order to comply with IDOT's Agricultural Land Preservation Policy which states, "*Recognizing that its transportation objectives must be in concert with the overall goals of the State, it is the policy of the DOT, in its programs, procedures, and operations, to preserve Illinois farmland to the extent practicable and feasible, giving appropriate consideration to the State's social, economic, and environmental goals.*" Planning studies for transportation projects must include an early determination of the potential for farmland conversion impacts if the IDOT is to adhere to this policy statement and the intent of the state's Farmland Preservation Act.

With the passage of 6 weeks since the District contacted its Central Office regarding the above-referenced issue, we are interested in learning the Central Office's response. If no response has been received, please contact us if you feel we can be of assistance in providing the Central Office with additional information that may assist them in giving full consideration to the issue.

Sincerely,


Steven D. Chard, Chief
Bureau of Farmland Protection

SDC:JRH:mdg

Enclosure

cc: Chet Boruff, IDOA
Pete Frantz, IDOT
John Rowley, IDOT
Ronald Mapes, US 20 Ag Committee



Illinois Department of Transportation

Division of Highways / District 2
819 Depot Avenue / Dixon, Illinois 61021-3500
Telephone 815/284-2271

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Studies and Plans
FAP 301 (US 20 Four-Lane)
Section 43-1, -2, -3, -4, -5 & 177-1, -2
IL 84(N) to Bolton Road (near Freeport)
Jo Daviess and Stephenson Counties

September 26, 1995

Mr. Steven D. Chard, Chief
Bureau of Farmland Protection
Division of Natural Resources
State Fairgrounds
Post Office Box 19281
Springfield, Illinois 62794-9281

Attn: Mr. Jim Hartwig

Dear Mr. Chard:

We are in response to your request at our past Bi-Monthly Meeting (and subsequent correspondence) concerning the design philosophy to be utilized in the layout of the proposed third ("Snipe Hollow") alignment for the above project. This discussion concerned the priority to be given to avoidance of prime farmland versus both other agricultural constraints (farm boundaries, drainage patterns, etc.) and all other regulatory environmental constraints.

We discussed this issue with our Central Office at our recent Program Development Engineers statewide meeting. At that meeting it was concurred that this is an issue of statewide concern that should be addressed at that level. For that reason, we will await our Central Office position on this matter to resolve your concerns.

Additionally, we have had difficulty in receiving aerial photos of accurate enough scale to permit us to overlay the alignment of the proposed freeway. We recently have had arials re-printed to a good enough scale to permit the overlay to be made for you. You therefore can expect it shortly.

If you have any questions, please call Larry Hill in District 2 at 815/284-5450.

Sincerely,

William D. Ost
District Engineer

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "L. E. Reed".

By: Larry E. Reed
Engineer of Program Development



State of Illinois

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

State Fairgrounds / P.O. Box 19281 / Springfield 62794-9281 TDD: 217/524-6858

Bureau of Environmental Programs
217/ 785-2427

Bureau of Farmland Protection
217/ 782-6297

Bureau of Soil and Water Conservation
217/ 782-6297

July 19, 1995

Mr. William D. Ost, District Engineer
Illinois Department of Transportation
Division of Highways/District 2
819 Depot Avenue
Dixon, Illinois 61021-3546

Re: U.S. Route 20
Galena to Freeport

Dear Mr. Ost:

The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) received the minutes of the June 14, 1995 District 2 Bi-Monthly Environmental Coordination Meeting. The above-referenced project was discussed at that meeting. I would like to clarify the comments I made during the meeting. I do not feel the minutes accurately reflect the point I was trying to make regarding the selection of a third alignment (known as the Snipe Hollow Alternate).

The minutes state how farm boundaries are considered by the consultant as a primary factor in the laying out of alignments for a proposed freeway alternative. The minutes state that this is the feedback that has been received from both the U.S. 20 Agricultural Work Group and farmers who have had potential farm severances on other freeway projects. The minutes then go on to say, "Mr. Hartwig stated the Department (IDOT) should instead utilize the soils maps in laying out freeway alignments and try to minimize the impact on the more important soil types protected by the Illinois Agricultural Preservation Act." A few sentences later, the minutes state, "Mr. Hartwig repeated that he did not feel that using farm boundary consideration was adequate and that an alternative should be developed looking at prime farmland as a determining agricultural impact in alignment determination."

Prior to my comments, there was a discussion regarding the identification of environmental "hot spots" and how their avoidance would be a factor in selecting a location for a new alignment through Snipe Hollow. I asked whether the avoidance of Prime farmland would be a factor in locating the new alignment. As I recall, someone indicated that Prime farmland would not be a determining factor in deciding where to locate a new alignment. Someone else then stated that once an alignment is established, an effort would be made to modify the alignment to better accommodate farm boundaries and minimize other agricultural impacts.

Mr. Ost
Page 2
July 19, 1995

The IDOA is aware that many factors must be considered in locating a new alignment through Snipe Hollow, but that environmental factors will play a major role in the decision making process. Consequently, the environmental "hot spots" must be identified early on in the planning process so an alignment can be located that will avoid or minimize harm to these resources.

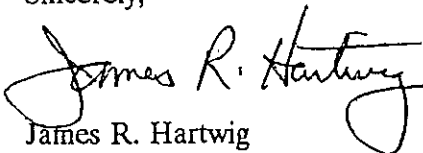
I asked at the Bi-Monthly meeting if it would be possible to do the same with Prime farmland as is done with the environmental "hot spots." I asked if a map could be made identifying all the Prime farmland in the Snipe Hollow study corridor and use it in locating an alignment that would minimize the conversion of Prime farmland. I stated that the alignment's location could then be modified to make adjustments for farm boundaries and to minimize other secondary agricultural impacts.

Such an up-front effort of identifying Prime farmland and locating an alignment so as to avoid or minimize its conversion will enable IDOT to best carry out its responsibilities as mandated by the state's Farmland Preservation Act and the federal Farmland Protection Policy Act. It is difficult to understand how any significant amount of Prime farmland can be saved if it is considered after an alignment has been selected and all other environmental impacts have been avoided or minimized.

The IDOA does not advocate the District giving a higher priority to Prime farmland than to wetlands, woodlands, threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, etc. We only request that Prime farmland be considered on a co-equal basis up-front as IDOT and its consultant study various alignments that will best avoid or minimize natural resource impacts (including impacts to Prime farmland).

Your response to our comments would be appreciated, especially whether the District or its consultant will examine potential alignments through Snipe Hollow that will impact the least amount of Prime farmland, making adjustments for farm boundaries, etc., thereafter.

Sincerely,



James R. Hartwig
Bureau of Farmland Protection

JRH:mdg

cc: Pete Frantz, IDOT
John Rowley, IDOT
Dave Kopacz, FHWA
Kevin Kell, Louis Berger & Associates, Inc.
Ronald Mapes, Agricultural Work Group



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Bureau of Environmental Programs
217/ 785-2427

Bureau of Farmland Protection
217/ 782-6297

Bureau of Soil and Water Conservation
217/ 782-6297

February 23, 1995

Mr. William D. Ost, District Engineer
Illinois Department of Transportation
Division of Highways/District 2
819 Depot Avenue
Dixon, Illinois 61021-3546

Re: U.S. 20
Freeport to Galena

Attn: Larry E. Reed

Dear Mr. Ost:

The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) is coordinating with IDOT District 2 on the improvement of U.S. 20 between Freeport and Galena. The IDOA has toured the study corridors twice and has attended several meetings on the project. However, considering the length and complexity of the project, it is very difficult for the IDOA to analyze the project's potential agricultural impacts without seeing the proposed alignments currently under study plotted on aerial photographs. It is also difficult for the IDOA to understand why the District may be favoring one alignment over another without the advantage of aerial photography.

In order for the IDOA to properly review the project, we would like to request the District to provide the IDOA with a set of aerial photographs with all proposed alignments plotted on the maps. It would be helpful if the property boundaries could also be shown on the maps. Naturally, as new alignments are studied our maps would need to be updated.

Without the aerial photography, it will be very difficult for the IDOA to assess the extent to which each alignment will impact the agricultural land. The complexity of the terrain, the location of residences and natural resource "hot spots," property boundaries, and other constraints set this project apart from those which are planned on flatter terrain. It would be very difficult for the IDOA to assess the agricultural impacts of the proposed alignments based solely on textual and tabular data.

One area of growing concern to the IDOA is the extent to which the District will seek to balance the project's environmental impacts. Based upon the tours and meetings the IDOA has participated in, we sense that additional agricultural land may be unnecessarily impacted in an effort to avoid and minimize impacts to other areas of the environment. While those impacts can be mitigated, farmland conversion impacts cannot and will not be mitigated.

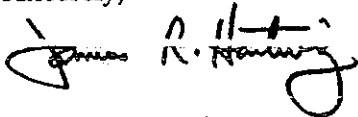
Mr. Ost
Page 2
February 23, 1995

We do not advocate that farmland be preserved with no regard for other natural resource impacts; however, we do feel the District should seek balance in the manner and extent to which all areas of the environment will be impacted. Coordination with the IDOA and the provision of the aerial photographs with updates as needed will enable the IDOA to provide the District with input on a timely basis. It is our desire that the District have the IDOA's input before the time when further alignment changes can no longer be considered.

As with any other projects of this scope, agricultural impacts will dwarf the impacts associated with other sectors of the natural environment. Because the agricultural impacts will be great, the IDOA seeks the District's cooperation in ensuring the agricultural impacts are assigned the same consideration as other natural resource impacts.

If the aerial mapping has not yet been completed for the project, or if it is premature for the alignments to be displayed in the manner we desire, please let the IDOA know. We would like to receive the mapping, however, before the time expires for minor alignment changes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "James R. Hartwig". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "J" and "H".

James R. Hartwig
Bureau of Farmland Protection

JRH:mdg

cc: John Rowley, IDOT
Dean Mentjes, FHWA
Ronald Mapes, Agricultural Work Group
Kevin Kell, Louis Berger & Associates, Inc.



State of Illinois DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Bureau of Environmental Programs
217/ 785-2427

Bureau of Farmland Protection
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Bureau of Soil and Water Conservation
217/ 782-6297

September 27, 1993

Ms. Susan K. Laue
Media Masters, Inc.
9341 Springfield Avenue
Evanston, Illinois 60203

Re: U. S. Route 20 Proposed Freeway
Freeport to Galena, Illinois

Dear Sue:

At the U. S. Route 20 Scoping Meeting that was conducted last week, you asked that I send you the official definitions of Prime and Important farmland. Enclosed is the cover and first few pages of a publication the USDA Soil Conservation Service prepared in 1991. These pages list the criteria for identifying Prime and Important farmland. If you wish to obtain a copy of the publication, you should contact Robert L. McLeese, USDA SCS, 1902 Fox Drive, Champaign, Illinois 61820, telephone (217) 398-5286.

The JoDaviess and the Stephenson County Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) could also assist you in identifying the Prime and Important soils in the two counties as well as the various classes of land that will be impacted by the project. Their addresses and telephone numbers are:

JoDaviess County SWCD, 227 North Main, Elizabeth, Illinois 61028, (815) 858-2229

Stephenson County SWCD, 640 West South Street, Freeport, Illinois 61032, (815) 235-2161

JoDaviess County has a modern soil survey completed. If the soil survey book has not been published yet, the field sheets (soil survey maps) should be available. Stephenson County has a published soil survey book.

It was a pleasure to meet you and your associates at the U. S. 20 tour and Scoping Meeting. I am looking forward to working with all of you as this project proceeds.

Sincerely,

James R. Hartwig
Bureau of Farmland Protection

JRH:mdg

Enclosure



State of Illinois

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September 10, 1993

Mr. William D. Ost, District Engineer
Illinois Department of Transportation
Division of Highways/District 2
819 Depot Avenue
Dixon, Illinois 61021-3546

Re: Scoping Meeting
FAP Route 301 (US 20)
Jo Daviess & Stephenson Counties

Attn: Larry Hill

Dear Mr. Ost:

Thank you for the invitation to attend the September 23, 1993 Scoping Meeting on the US 20 project in Jo Daviess and Stephenson Counties. The IDOA is very interested in the project, as it will result in extensive agricultural impacts within the two county area. Consequently, the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) desires to be a party to the scoping process that will be carried out on this project.

A representative of the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) will be attending the Scoping Meeting, however, we do not anticipate that anyone from the IDOA will be able to participate in the tour of the project route the day before.

Enclosed is a listing of the information the IDOA will need in order to properly assess the project's agricultural impacts. This information will also enable the IDOA to determine the project's compliance with the IDOT's Agricultural Land Preservation Policy and with the state's Farmland Preservation Act.

As the EIS is prepared for this project, the IDOA would like to make two requests.

1. The IDOA would ask that the EIS contain the same information as that which is requested on the enclosure to this letter. By including this information, we feel that the EIS will reflect an accurate assessment of the project's agricultural impacts and the measures to mitigate those impacts.

Mr. William D. Ost, District Engineer

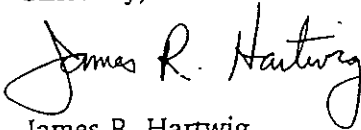
Page 2

September 10, 1993

2. The IDOA would ask that the EIS consider agricultural land as a segment of the natural environment rather than just a "land use" as is done in many environmental documents. Agriculture is a land use, but the farmland is a natural resource, just as wetlands and woodlands are land uses but also components of the natural environment.

Should you or your staff have questions regarding the information we are requesting or our review procedures, please contact us at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



James R. Hartwig
Bureau of Farmland Protection

JRH/

Enclosure

cc: John Rowley, IDOT
James Partlow, FHWA
Kevin Rund, IFB
Jo Daviess County SWCD
Stephenson County SWCD